

# FINAL APPROVAL NEAR ON STADIUM

## Lease All That Is Needed Before City Agrees to Build New Ball Park

Only one major hurdle remains to be cleared before the city gives the final go-ahead for construction of the new 55,000-seat \$16,226,250 sports stadium in Flushing Meadow Park, Queens.

This is the execution of a lease under which the new National League entry will agree to pay the city enough of an annual rental to make the stadium self-sustaining, a figure generally estimated at about \$900,000 a year.

Statements last night by Mayor Wagner, by William A. Shea, the chairman of the Mayor's Special Committee on Baseball, and by the Metropolitan Baseball Club of New York indicated that all steps necessary for making the stadium a reality by 1962 would be expedited.

The Metropolitan Baseball Club holds the new franchise awarded to New York by the National League.

### Mayor Is Delighted

Mayor Wagner expressed "delight" at New York's reinstatement in the National League. In addition, he pledged that construction of the new stadium in Flushing Meadow Park would be "accelerated."

Shea joined the Mayor in acclaiming the National League vote in Chicago. The chairman of the baseball committee called yesterday "the brightest day for New York baseball fans in the nearly three years since we lost the Giants and the Dodgers."

Shea added that he planned to sit down with the Mayor and other city officials to "go ahead with plans for the new stadium as quickly as possible."

For his part, Mayor Wagner said he was in a position to pledge the full support of the Board of Estimate. He added his certainty that "our city will support the new team and that our city will continue to be the sports capital of the nation."

The Metropolitan Baseball Club said it was "well aware of the National League's history in New York City and that a tremendous task lies ahead."

The club officials expressed confidence that it would earn the confidence of baseball fans in New York.

The club's statement was issued over the signatures of M. Donald Grant, the president; D. Dwight Davis Jr., the vice president, and G. H. Walker Jr., William Simpson and Mrs. Charles Shipman Payson, the co-owners.

Last Friday Mayor Wagner told the National League in a telegram that if New York received one of the new franchises, the Flushing Park stadium could be rushed to completion in 1962, perhaps in time for the start of the baseball season that year.

The Board of Estimate already has invested \$687,500 in the proposed stadium—\$170,000 for preliminary planning and an additional \$517,500 voted last April 28 for final plans.

With Mayor Wagner and Shea now pledged to expedite the project, the next indicated step in building is the letting of a construction contract about Dec. 1.

### Lease Must Come First

This contract-letting, Mayor Wagner has stipulated, must be preceded by execution of the required lease.

Construction will be supervised by the Park Department. Work is expected to get under way as soon as the bids can be received and the low bidder can qualify.

Last night speculation at City Hall turned on whether the stadium could be opened in time for the beginning of the 1962 season. Mr. Shea said:

"We might miss the opening by six weeks or something, but I think the stadium will be ready on time. If it isn't, I don't think the Yankees would object to using the Yankee Stadium for six weeks—and there's always the Polo Grounds."

Last Dec. 23 the City Planning Commission approved plans of the City Housing Authority for construction of a 1,700-apartment housing project, costing \$29,750,000, on the Polo Grounds site.

That action apparently doomed an idea of the Coogan estate, which owns the Polo Grounds, to develop the site for a \$45,000,000 "sports palace."

The proposed housing development, however, has never advanced to the Board of Estimate, which must give final approval. It has been understood that City Hall is waiting to see if any concrete proposal is put forward for a major sports facility on the Polo Grounds site.

The San Francisco baseball Giants' lease on the Polo Grounds expires in the spring of 1962. Then the Giants, under the terms of the lease, must raze the stands, a job estimated to cost around \$200,000.

Shea's baseball committee was appointed by Mayor Wagner, after the departure of the New York Giants to San Francisco and the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles, to see about bringing another team to New York.

After trying in vain to bring another National League team here, Shea projected the founding of the Continental League—a third major league. The league never came into playing existence, but on Aug. 2 of this year it won from the major league owners an agreement its cities would be given first consideration when the existing big leagues chose to expand.